NEWS ALERT NEWS ALERT

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RESULTS OF NATIONAL OPINION SURVEY ON U.S. FOREIGN POLICY

SUPPORT for Administration policy on
- Israeli settlements in occupied territories
- forcible return of Haitian refugees
- restricted entry to U.S. for those infected with HIV

OPPOSITION to Administration policy on
- environmental issues, specifically biodiversity and natural habitats
- AIDS, terming the fight inadequate

CONDITIONAL SUPPORT for
- North American free-trade agreement with Mexico

These are some of the views expressed by participants in the Foreign Policy Association's 1992 *Great Decisions* discussion and study program. Participants this year cast over 40,000 opinion ballots on the eight *Great Decisions* topics.

OTHER HIGHLIGHTS

DOMESTIC PRIORITIES. 40% of those surveyed put social problems (education, health, crime) at the top of the U.S. agenda. By contrast, stimulating the economy is ranked no. 1 by only 22%; reducing the budget deficit, by 20%.

GLOBAL PRIORITY. Neither go-it-alone nor stay-at-home is the choice of a majority of participants; 81% favor working through organizations such as the United Nations to solve international problems.

AIDS. Individual responsibility rather than government action is the key to controlling the AIDS epidemic, an overwhelming majority (71%) believes.

ECONOMIC AID AND THE ENVIRONMENT. Give economic aid only to developing countries that implement sound environmental policies is the position of a large majority: 53% agree outright and another 31% with reservations.

FORMER SOVIET UNION. A multilateral "Marshall Plan" for Russia and the other republics is supported by 59% of the participants.

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What are Foreign Policy Association opinion ballots? Opinion ballots are included in each annual *Great Decisions* briefing book, prepared by the editors of the national nonpartisan Foreign Policy Association. The ballots reflect the views of some of the 250,000 people who take part in study and discussion of the eight topics. The subjects this year covered American priorities, Mideast peace prospects, the refugee crisis, Latin America, Planet Earth, Africa's second liberation, AIDS and the Soviet breakup

FOREIGN POLICY ASSOCIATION

729 Seventh Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10019
Contact: Ms. Thetis Reavis, (212) 764-4050

FOREIGN POLICY ASSOCIATION
729 SEVENTH AVENUE, NEW YORK, NEW YORK 10019 • (212) 764-4050

NATIONAL OPINION BALLOT REPORT

OCTOBER 1992

Opinion ballots have been included in the Foreign Policy Association's annual **Great Decisions** *briefing book since 1955 to enable participants to make their views known to their representatives in Washington and to the news media. Again this year, tabulation of ballots received by June 30 was performed by Calculogic Corporation, 2929 Broadway, New York, N.Y., which furnished the printouts on which this report is based. FPA is indebted to Joseph Lopatin, president of Calculogic, for his contribution which helped make this report possible.*

The **National Opinion Ballot Report** *was prepared by Helmut Norpoth, professor of political science at the State University of New York at Stony Brook and a former consultant to the New York Times/CBS News Poll. The report contains illustrative comments from Great Decisions participants. The views expressed are those of the participants, not those of FPA, which is a nonpartisan educational organization and takes no position on issues of U.S. foreign policy.*

Additional copies of the report may be obtained free from the Foreign Policy Association.

TOPIC 1: U.S. AGENDA

With the United States now enjoying the status of the world's lone military superpower, the vast majority of National Opinion Ballot participants favor neither a go-it-alone nor a stay-at-home role for the United States in international affairs. Instead the consensus is that the U.S. should work through international organizations such as the United Nations. As one participant put it emphatically, "If we are to have a 'New World Order' the UN is the *only* way to go!" Others underlined the need for cooperation by insisting on working "with" the UN, not just "through" it. In particular, the U.S. government was urged to "pay our dues and lend our military to keep the peace." Yet some participants supportive of cooperation did not object to having the U.S. "occasionally take the lead" to prod an organization in which "small oligarchies wield too much influence."

Pondering the domestic policy agenda, participants were not quite as united as they were in their international views. For all the talk about the economy being the towering issue in this election year, just two in ten Opinion Ballot participants felt that the most important priority of U.S. domestic policy should be to stimulate the economy. About the same proportion picked reducing the budget deficit. Most participants, though not a majority, expressed primary concern with social problems (education, health and crime were explicitly listed on the ballots).

Even though the participants' domestic agenda appeared to lack a single dominant issue, the deficit evoked the most emotional commentary. One participant wrote: "The greatest crisis in family life is excessive debt. The same is true for a nation. Nothing is going to work well until we *eliminate* the deficit." Others clearly regarded the achievement of one goal as instrumental in reaching others on the list of domestic priorities. Summed up one participant: "If we can't compete at home, our future generation won't be able to compete overseas."

Issue A. The principal international role of the U.S. should be to:

Take the lead in solving global problems.	7%
Work through organizations such as the UN to solve global problems.	81%
Participate in solving international problems only when they affect Americans directly.	7%

Note: These and all other percentages reported below may not add up to 100 because some participants did not mark particular ballots or volunteered other responses not tabulated here.

Issue B. The domestic policy priority of the U.S. should be to:
(Readers were asked to rank the following in order of importance.)

Hone its competitive edge in the global economy.	10%
Address social problems (education, health, crime).	40%
Stimulate the economy.	22%
Reduce the budget deficit.	20%
Maintain its military strength.	2%

TOPIC 2: MIDEAST PEACE PROSPECTS

The most serious obstacle to an Israeli-Palestinian peace settlement, a significant majority (61%) of participants believes, are irreconcilable demands by both sides. Several participants in their written comments alluded to even deeper impediments to peace: "Arabic, Jewish and Christian cultures are irreconcilably different."

Asked to evaluate the way President George Bush has handled the issue of settlements in Israel's occupied territories, a clear majority voiced approval. The favorable evaluation of the Administration in this area squares with the majority judgment that the U.S. is giving the Middle East the appropriate priority on its diplomatic agenda. The minority is evenly divided between supporters of a higher and a lower priority.

The embargo of Iraq likewise enjoys widespread support among Great Decisions participants. Two thirds do not want to see it lifted until Iraq has complied with all relevant UN resolutions. But some participants who voiced that opinion underlined the UN aspect of the embargo question and admonished the U.S. against taking unilateral actions. While fewer than one in ten participants favored lifting the embargo now, almost two in ten advocated keeping the embargo in effect as long as Saddam Hussein stays in power.

Issue A. The most serious obstacles to a peace settlement between Israel and the Palestinians are:

Irreconcilable demands by both sides.	61%
Israeli demands.	23%
Palestinian demands.	6%
Arab states' involvement.	6%

Issue B. With regard to the economic embargo of Iraq:

The U.S. should lift the embargo of Iraq now.	8%
The U.S. should lift the embargo only after Iraq complies with all relevant UN resolutions, including disclosure of all weapons and related research.	65%
The U.S. should maintain the embargo as long as Saddam Hussein is in power, even if Iraq complies with the UN resolutions.	18%

Issue C. Do you approve or disapprove of President Bush's handling of the issue of settlements in the occupied territories?

Approve	53%
Disapprove	32%

Issue D. What priority should the U.S. give the Middle East on its diplomatic agenda?

The Middle East should get higher priority.	14%
The Middle East should get the same priority it now has.	59%
The Middle East should get lower priority.	15%

TOPIC 3: REFUGEE CRISIS

Participants, by a two-to-one margin, back the U.S. policy of forcing Haitians who have fled their island to return home, though many do so with reservations. Similarly, a majority supports U.S. opposition to the resettlement in the U.S. of Vietnamese living in camps in Hong Kong. One comment reflected the majority opinion: "We can't take all the world's needy and overpopulations." But one respondent in the minority asked: "Whatever happened to the 'land of opportunity'?" Another wondered whether "we live up to the inscription on the Statue of Liberty." Some urged special consideration for refugees from Vietnam since the U.S. was "partly responsible for the Vietnamese problem."

Most respondents agree with the U.S. policy of distinguishing between refugees who flee political persecution and those who flee economic hardship, and oppose broadening the definition of refugees to allow more into the U.S. More oppose than favor the easing of the requirements that refugees prove "fear of persecution." One person who spoke for many commented, "We must help to the maximum of our ability and finances."

Issue A. Regarding the issue of forcible repatriation, do you agree or disagree with the following statements:

	AGREE	AGREE WITH RESERVATIONS	DISAGREE	DISAGREE WITH RESERVATIONS
The U.S. should continue the forcible return of Haitians to Haiti.	28%	33%	21%	14%
The U.S. should treat all migrants the way it treats Cubans: those who can make it to the U.S. should be allowed to stay.	9%	22%	29%	36%
The U.S. should offer to resettle Vietnamese currently in camps in Hong Kong in the U.S.	8%	23%	25%	39%

Issue B. Do you agree or disagree with the following statements regarding U.S. policy on admitting refugees?

	AGREE	AGREE WITH RESERVATIONS	DISAGREE	DISAGREE WITH RESERVATIONS
The U.S. should continue to distinguish between refugees from political persecution and those fleeing economic hardship.	40%	27%	12%	9%
The U.S. should not broaden the definition of refugees to allow more into the U.S.	40%	21%	15%	11%
The U.S. should be less strict about requirements that refugees prove "fear of persecution."	18%	24%	18%	27%

TOPIC 4: LATIN AMERICA

President Bush's Enterprise for the Americas Initiative and the North American free-trade agreement can count on considerable support among Great Decisions participants: 40% checked this policy as the one that would contribute most to the economic development of Latin America. An equal number, 40%, favored regional cooperation and consultation as contributing the most to economic development. None of the remaining alternatives—private investment, debt relief and aid—was very popular. As one put it, "we should spend less time giving and more time helping them learn how to solve their own problems."

Few were prepared to give their unqualified support to the North American-Mexican free-trade agreement. Close to two thirds hedged their approval on the condition that Mexico live up to environmental laws, protect human rights and hold free, fair elections. One skeptical participant warned that the free-trade agreement with Mexico "is a double-edged sword; not a level playing field; greed prompts the export of jobs." Another demanded that "U.S.-owned plants in Mexico should have to meet U.S. environmental standards, or I will not buy their products, cars especially."

Issue A. What U.S. policies would contribute most to the economic development of Latin America?

Strengthening regional cooperation and consultation.	40%
Promoting trade through the Enterprise for the Americas Initiative and the North Americanfree-trade agreement.	40%
Encouraging private investment.	10%
Increasing debt relief.	5%
Increasing aid.	1%

Issue B. With regard to the North American free-trade agreement with Mexico, the U.S. should:

	YES	NO
Support the agreement unconditionally.	25%	57%
Condition support on Mexico's enforcement of environmental laws.	66%	14%
Condition support on Mexico's protection of human rights.	62%	16%
Condition support on Mexico's holding of free, fair elections.	53%	24%
Break off negotiations.	25	72%

TOPIC 5: RX FOR PLANET EARTH

Public concern with the environment has cast a long shadow over the issue of giving aid to developing countries. Several options were endorsed by a majority of participants, though with varying degrees of reservation. The only option clearly out of favor with participants was to redirect aid targeted for the environment to development. Support was strongest for granting aid only to developing countries that implement sound environmental policies: 53% agreed with that position outright, and another 31% did so with reservations. A majority also favored those countries' right to decide their own balance between development and environment, but only 20% did so outright, while 41% agreed with reservations. To enable developing countries to adopt environmental safeguards, a majority supported increasing aid targeted for the environment.

The Administration was criticized for its handling of environmental issues: 45% of the respondents graded its record on preserving biodiversity and natural habitats as poor, another 34% as fair. As one participant put it, "How can we dictate to other countries when the U.S. record is so poor?"

A solid majority recommended action by Congress to make the Endangered Species Act more effective rather than leaving the act unchanged or amending it in favor of growth and development. Some advocates, however, called it "a bitter pill" or urged Congress to "classify species to be protected based on benefit to humanity."

Issue A. With regard to the environmental policies of developing countries, the U.S. should:

	AGREE	AGREE WITH RESERVATIONS	DISAGREE	DISAGREE WITH RESERVATIONS
Continue present policies and current levels of aid to developing countries.	15%	39%	21%	16%
Increase aid targeted for the environment because without it developing countries cannot afford environmental safeguards.	40%	34%	12%	7%
Redirect aid targeted for the environment to development.	10%	17%	23%	39%
Respect developing countries' rights to decide how to balance their development needs with environmental protection and accept their priorities.	20%	42%	22%	10%
Condition development aid on the implementation of sound environmental policies.	53%	31%	6%	3%

Issue B. How would you rate the Bush Administration's record on preserving biodiversity and natural habitats?

Excellent	1%
Good	10%
Fair	34%
Poor	45%

Issue C. What action should Congress take regarding the Endangered Species Act when it comes up for reauthorization?

Amend the act to make it more effective in protecting species.	50%
Amend the act in favor of growth and development, which are hurt by costly environmental constraints.	15%
Reauthorize the act unchanged.	19%

TOPIC 6: SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

Pondering the issue of aid to sub-Saharan Africa, most participants recommended neither an increase in economic aid nor maintaining the present levels and distribution of aid. However, only a minority would eliminate assistance with the exception of emergency humanitarian aid. One who opposed aid wrote: "They are their own worst enemy. Give nothing to governments." Participants expressed little faith in the political leaders of those countries. "There has to be some guarantee that the money given to Africa is not lost in the leaders' pockets," one insisted.

Most participants supported giving economic aid to sub-Saharan countries only under certain conditions: 62% called for economic reforms, while 48% stipulated political reforms. It appears that the argument in favor of economic reforms (economic growth is a precondition of democracy) was more convincing than the one in favor of political reforms (without democracy economic growth will falter).

Asked about when sanctions against white-ruled South Africa should be lifted, more participants recommended that sanctions be lifted gradually rather than now or only after there is universal suffrage. As one respondent put it: "Every time a new step toward equality occurs, one sanction should be lifted, but there should still be sanctions until blacks are allowed to vote."

Issue A. What approach should the U.S. take with regard to aid to sub-Saharan Africa?

	YES	NO
Increase economic aid.	26%	54%
Condition aid on economic reforms because economic growth is a precondition for democracy.	62%	23%
Condition aid on political reforms because without democracy economic growth will falter.	48%	34%
Maintain present levels and distribution of aid.	29%	47%
Eliminate all but emergency humanitarian aid.	27%	54%

Issue B. What approach should the U.S. take toward economic sanctions against South Africa?

Lift remaining sanctions now.	22%
Lift remaining sanctions gradually.	43%
Maintain sanctions until there is universal suffrage.	22%

TOPIC 7: AIDS PANDEMIC

By a wide margin, participants point to individual responsibility rather than government action as the key to controlling the AIDS epidemic. Yet large numbers also chide the Administration for not doing enough to fight AIDS. At the same time, though, most are opposed to Congress spending more money to fight AIDS overseas. And most agree with the statement that preoccupation with AIDS is diverting attention from other problems threatening developing nations. All but a few favor closing the country to foreigners infected with HIV.

Issue A. Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

	AGREE	AGREE WITH RESERVATIONS	DISAGREE	DISAGREE WITH RESERVATIONS
The Administration is not doing enough to fight AIDS.	34%	23%	18%	20%
Congress should increase funding to fight AIDS overseas.	15%	27%	24%	28%
Individual responsibility, not government action, is the key to controlling the epidemic.	39%	32%	14%	11%
Preoccupation with the epidemic is diverting attention from other problems threatening developing nations.	29%	33%	16%	15%

Issue B. What position should the U.S. take on allowing entry of foreigners infected with HIV?

The U.S. should exclude everyone who tests positive.	38%
The U.S. should permit those infected with HIV temporary visits but not permanent residence.	38%
The U.S. should remove restrictions on those who test positive for HIV.	10%

TOPIC 8: SOVIET BREAKUP

There is strong support for a "Marshall Plan" to help the people in the former Soviet Union make their transition to a free-market system. The feeling is widespread that the "Marshall Plan worked after World War II and would again." It must be emphasized, however, that this time it is a question of the U.S. enlisting other countries for such a plan, not doing it all by itself. A significant minority nonetheless remains wary of a massive U.S. aid effort. Some feel that the "Bush/Baker plan is more than enough."

Opinion is divided over how best to encourage peace and stability in the disintegrating Soviet Union. A bare majority puts its stock in the UN and regional organizations. Some reasoned that "we have to let them settle their own problems or it won't work." But a minority comprising 40% prefers the U.S. to use its influence, albeit in the role of "honest broker." This, as one noted, "has been our role since 1960 and has worked." Even those supportive of having the UN deal with the problems underlined "arms control" as an area where the U.S. should remain involved.

Issue A. What economic policies should the U.S. adopt to help the Soviet people?

The U.S. should enlist other countries' support for a Marshall Plan to provide economic assistance, development loans and technical advice for the transition to a free-market system.	59%
The U.S. should supply emergency food relief and encourage private enterprise but be wary of granting other financial aid.	32%
The U.S. should not supply aid.	1%

Issue B. How can the U.S. encourage peace and stability in the disintegrating Soviet Union?

The U.S. should use its influence to act as an "honest broker," encouraging the Soviet people to resolve disputes, control arms and pursue democracy and economic reforms.	40%
The U.S. should let the UN and regional organizations deal with arms control, ethnic rivalry and other problems facing the Soviet people.	51%

CHARACTERISTICS OF PARTICIPANTS

All in all, 40,401 ballots were received this year, a 13% increase over last year and the largest number in four years. Slightly over 5,000 participants, on the average, sent in ballots for a given topic. For one of every three participants, this was a first-time experience. The background of participants differs considerably from the general population. Women outnumber men by a three-to-two margin. The majority is over 60 years of age. The top ten states, ranked by ballot participation, are: California, Florida, Oregon, Illinois, North Carolina, Ohio, Washington, Virginia, New York and Colorado. Three of every four participants are college graduates, with many holding advanced degrees. Over half indicated that they were asked about their opinions on foreign policy matters at least sometimes. Also more than half reported they had been abroad in the last four years.

How many years have you participated in the Great Decisions program?

This is the first year I have participated.	33%
I participated in one previous year.	14%
I participated in more than one previous years.	53%

Sex

Female	65%
Male	35%

Have you been abroad during the last four years?

Yes	55%
No	45%

Highest level of formal education

Some high school	3%
High school degree	9%
Some college	16%
College graduate	40%
Advanced degree	32%

How often are your asked for your opinion on foreign policy matters?

Often	17%
Sometimes	54%
Hardly ever	29%

Would you say that you have or have not changed your opinion in a fairly significant way as a result of taking part in the Great Decisions program?

Have changed	44%
Have not changed	31%
Uncertain	25%